The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform approved, by voice vote, a bill to enhance the independence and accountability of Inspectors General, the watchdogs in federal agencies. The bill now moves to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

H.R. 928, the Improving Government Accountability Act, was introduced by Rep. Jim Cooper of Tennessee. Based on input from a June Subcommittee hearing on the bill, Rep. Cooper amended his bill to:

(1) specify that the term limits for Inspectors General apply prospectively,

(2) require that reports of investigation from the Integrity Committee be submitted to Congress within 30 days of their submission to the Executive Chairperson of the Inspectors General Council,

(3) prohibit Inspectors General from receiving cash awards or cash bonuses, and

(4) reclassify Inspectors General at Executive Schedule Level IV to Executive Schedule Level III and require that Inspectors General of designated federal entities be classified for pay purposes at a level comparable to other senior staff members of the agency.

The Cooper amendment incorporated H.R. 2527, the Enhanced Protection of the Internal Revenue Service and Its Employees Act of 2007, a bill introduced by Rep. Maloney to streamline authorities of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

The Cooper amendment also expanded the authority of the Comptroller General to take sworn testimony, and required the Comptroller General to assess the cooperation of federal agencies with Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigations and promptly report to Congress if agencies refuse to provide information to GAO.